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SUBJECT: CONSULTING ON MUSLIM ENGAGEMENT

REF: STATE 71325

¶1. SUMMARY: Following the President's Cairo Speech, we have consulted with various civil society groups and key target communities to identify ways to move forward priorities outlined in the speech. Among ideas presented by stakeholders for renewed collaboration are opening a community center that adheres to Islamic values which the embassy could use to host cultural events, increasing the informal dialogue between Muslim Americans and Muslim Tanzanians, and increasing exchange opportunities. In consideration of Tanzania's strictly secular government and diversity of religious beliefs (62% Christian, 35% Muslim, 3% Hindu/Sikh/Bahai/traditional), our engagement with Muslim communities is part of a broader outreach effort to the variety of communities of faith in the country. END SUMMARY.

¶2. In Dar es Salaam, meetings with the leadership of the Mwinyibarakaa Islamic Foundation indicated a positive reaction to the speech, with a great desire for further consultation and interaction. Some ideas presented were co-funding of an Islamic-friendly community center, which would provide a safe environment conducive to Islamic values, and would provide the embassy a platform to host cultural affairs events outside the embassy or a private residence. Other ideas from the influential leader of this organization were for strengthened "Sister Mosque" relationships with U.S. mosques, and holding DVCs between Tanzanian Muslim Groups in Secondary School and American Muslims in High Schools.

¶3. The imam of a key mosque in central Dar es Salaam, who had just returned from his IVLP program on religious tolerance, asked for additional copies of the Cairo speech, saying that he wanted to study the text closely before deciding how to present ideas for further collaboration to his followers. While he is still cautious, he was open to the idea of speaking at Islamic Secondary Schools about his positive experience in the United States and about the points of the speech. This imam has a radically-altered view of the U.S. after his visit and is eager but unsure of whether being supportive of the U.S. will make him sound like an apologist for U.S. foreign policies that Tanzania's Muslim community does not support.

¶4. In a meeting with the Mayor of Tanga, a town on the Swahili coast, PDO received a request for direct communication and relationship building with American Muslims, perhaps through a sister-mosque relationship or expanded exchange visits. Tanga and Toledo, Ohio are sister cities, and so already have a strong two-way exchange history.

¶5. In consultations with educators, requests were made for additional educational exchange opportunities, from study programs to online courses like the successful E-Teacher program that numerous Tanzanians have completed in the past two years.

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